



## Building Momentum

### Improving Men's Health and Prostate Cancer Treatment

*From the European Cancer Organisation's Men & Cancer Workstream*

#### Context and purpose

In November 2025, the European Cancer Organisation organised a Spotlight Session on "Improving Men's Health and Prostate Cancer Treatment" during the European Cancer Summit 2025. The event discussed how to seize the policy momentum to improve prostate cancer outcomes and address persistent inequalities in men's cancer care.

The session aligned with preparations for the European Cancer Screening and Early Detection Summit in early 2026, and aimed **to consolidate emerging evidence, policy perspectives, and stakeholder insights on prostate cancer** awareness, prevention, screening, early detection, and care.

The session was conducted in the context of a shared understanding that prostate cancer's significance as a major public health challenge remains insufficiently addressed, especially as the incidence of prostate cancer is projected to rise significantly in the coming decades. Indeed, a major study in *The Lancet* projects global prostate cancer cases rising from c1.4 million in 2020 to c.2.9 million by 2040<sup>1</sup>.

#### Prostate cancer and men's health: addressing a structural blind spot

Cancer represents a disproportionately high cause of mortality among men, accounting for 29% of all male deaths in the EU, highlighting a persistent problem requiring elevated policy attention.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/piis0140-6736%2824%2900651-2/fulltext>

<sup>2</sup> [https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/latest-eu-cancer-data-what-new-2025-12-17\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/latest-eu-cancer-data-what-new-2025-12-17_en) The latest EU cancer data: what is new? The geography, age and gender of cancer: what the latest numbers reveal about the burden of cancer across the EU.



Despite advances in cancer control, men are less likely to take part in preventive health services, more likely to be diagnosed at later stages, and face structural and behavioural barriers to early detection and timely care<sup>3</sup>.

Unlike some other cancers, prostate cancer is less able to be prevented through behavioural or primary prevention measures, making awareness raising and early detection through organised screening programmes all the more important to reduce mortality and morbidity. Yet prostate cancer fails to receive the same level of systematic policy attention or organised screening as other cancers.

Participants in the session emphasised that this imbalance is increasingly untenable, especially in view of new advances in understanding and in available technologies and approaches, for prostate cancer screening.

Advances in risk stratification and imaging, combined with biomarker-based diagnostic pathways, now enable not only more targeted and effective early detection strategies, with reduced risks of overdiagnosis, but also more effective treatment strategies.

Meanwhile, **prostate cancer incidence is expected to increase substantially due to demographic ageing**, increasing pressure and rationale for proactive policy response.

Advocates also stressed the gaps in mental health support for prostate cancer patients and their partners. Research finds a high proportion of prostate cancer patients, once diagnosed, are at risk of mental distress. Many experience inadequate support in this respect, leading to high levels of anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Despite this, significant gaps exist in the psychosocial support for prostate cancer, particularly in addressing long-term needs, managing sexual and urinary side effects, and tailoring care for diverse populations.

From a patient perspective, prostate cancer continues to present not only clinical challenges but also psychosocial burden and stigma. The variability in both access in treatment and survivorship and quality of life support across European countries is manifest.

## From evidence to implementation: prostate cancer screening enters a new policy phase

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<sup>3</sup> OECD & European Union – Health at a Glance: Europe / EU Cancer Inequalities Registry  
[https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/beating-cancer-inequalities-in-the-eu\\_14fdc89a-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/beating-cancer-inequalities-in-the-eu_14fdc89a-en.html)



European cancer screening pilot initiatives, including large-scale programmes such as PRAISE-U<sup>4</sup> and related national efforts, are generating critical evidence on the feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and optimal design of risk-stratified prostate cancer screening approaches.

These programmes reflect a shift away from opportunistic testing toward organised, population-based approaches using structured invitation systems, PSA-based risk assessment, and advanced diagnostic pathways.

With prostate cancer incidence projected to double by 2040<sup>5</sup>, health systems face an urgent need to shift from reactive treatment toward earlier detection and structured prevention pathways. Policy perspectives should therefore emphasise the opportunities now presented by organised prostate cancer screening.

While screening offers one of the most effective tools to reduce prostate cancer mortality, its integration into national health systems requires prolonged investment and a long-term implementation strategy, ensuring access to necessary diagnostic infrastructure, appropriate referral pathways, and workforce capacity.

Discussions at the European Cancer Summit also highlighted the risk that prostate cancer could remain under-prioritised despite the availability of effective early detection and treatment tools. Compared to other cancer screening programmes, prostate cancer has historically received less structured investment and policy focus, creating missed opportunities to detect disease earlier and improve outcomes. In addition, disparities in availability, reimbursement, and integration into clinical pathways continue to affect patient outcomes.

The transition from pilot programmes to organised, implemented national screening programmes represents a critical point in addressing these disparities and ensuring that technological and clinical progress translates into population-level impact.

National health systems differ significantly in their capacity to implement organised screening, including variations in infrastructure, workforce capacity, data systems, and national policy prioritisation. Inequalities in access to advanced personalised care and treatment options continue to create differences in outcomes between and within countries.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://uroweb.org/praise-u>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/piiS0140-6736%2824%2900651-2/fulltext>



Emerging evidence highlights the importance of broader determinants of men's health, including environmental and occupational exposures, reinforcing the need for comprehensive and gender-responsive cancer control strategies.

## Recommendations from the Spotlight Session

The discussion focused on the need to translate growing evidence and pilot experience into structured policy action.

Participants underscored that momentum alone will not be sufficient: coordinated European and national measures are now required to ensure that advances in early detection, education, prevention and care lead to better cancer outcomes for men.

A number of recommendations were suggested, including:

- **Supporting fully developed risk-stratified screening national programmes:** Member states and EU institutions should define clear pathways for scaling organised, risk-based prostate cancer screening, building on pilot evidence and ensuring alignment with forthcoming European guidance.
- **Ensuring equitable access to innovative treatment:** Efforts to expand early detection must be matched by investment in diagnostic infrastructure, biomarker testing, imaging capacity, and timely referral pathways, addressing persistent disparities in access across and within countries.
- **Ensuring access to psychosocial and peer support:** Prostate cancer patients and their partners should receive appropriate and tailored psychosocial support, where needed. This could include a mix of emotional, informational, and practical care to manage anxiety, depression, and treatment side effects, particularly access to support groups (peer-led or formal).
- **Strengthen the focus on prostate cancer within existing European and national cancer policies and frameworks.** National cancer policies, plans and strategies on cancer should specifically address men's health men's cancer needs and include a sufficient focus on the prostate cancer, with clear associated Key Performance Indicators.



- **Embedding prostate cancer within broader gender-responsive cancer strategies:** Prostate cancer policy should be integrated into comprehensive men's health approaches that address behavioural barriers, health literacy, and engagement with preventive services.
- **Strengthening data and accountability mechanisms:** Robust data collection, outcome monitoring, and cross-country comparison will be essential to guide implementation, evaluate impact, and reduce inequalities in screening uptake and treatment access.

## Building momentum for coordinated European action – next steps

The spotlight confirmed that prostate cancer policy in Europe is entering a critical momentum: with screening pilot programmes advancing, new EU-policy initiatives under development, and increasing recognition of prostate cancer inequalities, the foundations are being laid for more structured and coordinated approaches to early detection and care.

The landmark *European Cancer Screening and Early Detection Summit*<sup>6</sup> held in March 2026 offered an important milestone in advancing these discussions and supporting the translation of pilot evidence into policy and implementation pathways.

The European Cancer Organisation's Men & Cancer Workstream will continue to play an active role in this process throughout 2026, supporting policy dialogue, consolidating evidence, and contributing to strategies aimed at improving prostate cancer outcomes and reducing inequalities in men's cancer care across Europe.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.europeancancer.org/events/345:the-european-cancer-screening-and-early-detection-summit.html>



## *Annex 1 – Acknowledgements*

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